



# NACOP Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 1

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## Message From the Co-Chairs

Barbie Ballengee & Sherri Buxton

Happy Fall from the National Advisory Council for Office Professionals (NACOP). This will be our first quarterly newsletter designed to provide you with helpful tips and general news about ARS. We welcome everyone's contributions to the newsletter. Please send any news items you would like considered to: [Sbuxton@mwa.ars.usda.gov](mailto:Sbuxton@mwa.ars.usda.gov). The next issue will be sent in January.

The annual meeting of the NACOP was held in July and hosted by our Southern Plains Area located in College Station, Texas. The week was spent brainstorming on new initiatives, working on our homepage, reviewing and editing our Charter, reflecting on the successes of our national meeting, and recommitting ourselves to the goals of our Council. In addition, the Council decided to modify our name slightly by removing the word "Support" from our name. This was suggested by Ms. Wilda Martinez at the national meeting held in New Orleans.

We would like to thank the following members who completed their 3-year term: Jannette Shuford-Reeves, NAL; Brenda Aysenne, MSA; Sabrina Whitley-Ferrell, SAA; Brenda Elston, HACOSP; and our Technical Advisor, Toni Walls.

Representatives for the 2003-2004 Council are: Barbie Ballengee, Senior Co-Chair; Sherri Buxton, Junior Co-Chair; Sheila Messineo, Recorder; Stephanie Lively; Louise Dalton; Olivia Pedraza; Iris Rosa; Jan Cline; Debra Duckworth; Madeline Hall; and Terry Henrichs. Clarice Fleming assumed her new role as Technical Advisor to NACOP and Sabrina Whitley-Ferrell agreed to serve in an Ex-Officio capacity as our new Webmaster. Cathy Lonaberger will continue in her advisory role as an Ex-Officio Member and James Bradley will continue in his role as our Sponsor.

## 2003 National Conference Highlights

By: Clarice Fleming

The April 2003 NACOSP Conference titled "Quest to be the Best Striving for Professional Excellence," held in New Orleans, Louisiana, was a huge success. From the opening reception medley of Exercising Your Mind, Body, and Spirit to the last rousing ovation at the closing remarks by keynote speaker Mark Towers. The conference was filled with education, inspiration, camaraderie, and fun.

All 150 administrative support professionals, as well as the 50 presenters, were able to choose from fourteen sessions covering a broad range of topics such as:

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About NPS

Overview of Setting Up Grants & Agreements

Ask the ARIS Experts  
Who's Afraid of ARMPS  
Building a Bridge to Better Communication  
Enhancing Your Skills  
What Would Your Nest Egg Look Like  
The Mystery of the Federal Budget  
Timing is Everything When You are Balancing  
Work & Life  
AFM - The Virtual Tour  
Travel from Here to There  
Are You Puzzled About Your Career  
Achieving Personal & Professional Experience  
Meeting the Challenge: Learning to Live With  
Congress

There was ample opportunity for networking with peers and meeting new people during breaks and free time.

All Area Councils provided outstanding exhibit booth displays in sharing the research.

As the sponsor for NACOP, Mr. James H. Bradley, said in his closing remarks, "This conference is all about you, the attendees. The fact that so many of you attended shows the need to continue to build on the valuable administrative support skills you already possess and we'll continue to listen to you and develop a conference program that meets your changing needs."

### **Brown Bag Luncheon Sessions**

By: Jan Cline

Under the leadership of Sub-committee Chairman, Deborah Yeadon, a committee consisting of Lynn Booker, Crystal Thomas, Charlene Brown, Amanda Millner, Brenda Redding, Robin Pettway, Twila Moorman, and JoAnn Frazier, of the Headquarters Advisory Council for Support Professionals (HACOSP), have launched a very successful series of monthly "Brown Bag Luncheon" sessions. Each session lasts less than one hour and the audience is educated, entertained, motivated and informed all while they have lunch, not taking any time away from the work schedule. The feedback from each and every one of these sessions has been so positive, leaving the audience wanting

more, more, and more. Suggestions are flooding in for topics for future sessions. Early on in the series, in her own personal style, Linda Mahoney, AFM's Travel Expert, made herself available for all those travel questions you had, but were afraid to ask. Travel processors new to the field were inundated with important facts, and seasoned processors were surprised to learn, they didn't know it all, after all. Wendy Johnson, AFM's Human Resources Division's Performance and Awards Section, captivated her audience with an outstanding motivational message.....spirits were elevated and a highly enthused group left that session with their "goals" uppermost on their mind. Linda Wilson and Renay Weissman from the Headquarters Policy Branch set the record straight when it comes to that PCMS program. Veterans received some fine tuning of their skills, and we all learned what the Agency had in store for this very important program. Most recently, Anita Kopman, of the REE SMART Center, dared us to Get SMARTer. The audience at this brown bag session, accepted her dare and have visited the SMART Center to do just that. Titles of future brown bag sessions are: "Stress Relief and Relaxation on the Job? Show Me!" "Super Woman Doesn't Live Here Anymore..." "FFIS (Accounting) Review – Make Your Numbers Match." "What Would Your Nest Egg Look Like?" "Microsoft Word – Stay Tuned.. There is Still More to Learn." All of us here at Headquarters are proud of HACOSP's Deborah Yeadon, and her Brown Bag Luncheon committee. If you have a suggestion, or a word of praise and encouragement for Deborah and her committee, they would love to hear from you on [dsy@ars.usda.gov](mailto:dsy@ars.usda.gov).

### **Helpful Tip from the NPA:**

By: Sylvia Buggle

Have you ever been leafing through the latest issue of the [Agricultural Research Magazine](#) (AR) and thought that you might like to use the pictures of your area or research station? Well,

the AR Magazine makes it easy for you to do just that.

The Northern Plains Area has compiled two separate "Special Issues" of their area features out of the monthly magazines. These issues are being used for distribution to the public for educational purposes. The NPA is also currently selecting pictures from past issues to use in their upcoming new facility. What a great way to feature the work and projects of all their locations at their new consolidated headquarters.

As a new employee to USDA, being given the task of compiling the many pictures by location, and identifying them for reference, I have not only learned a great deal about "cut and paste" but about the very special work done throughout this Agency.

Agricultural Research Magazine has made searching for an image or an article a breeze. Go to our new ARS website: [www.ars.usda.gov](http://www.ars.usda.gov) Click on ADVANCED in the upper right hand corner. This will open a search menu that will let you search by title, by photo number (they are in small print along the edge of each photo and start with a "K") or by topic. If you are looking to transport a photograph enter the K number in the "Find Results with exact phrase." When your picture comes up, move your cursor to the picture, right click and select copy. Go to your file path in Word or Word Perfect or wherever you wish to create your document and click on Paste. Your image may be adjusted to your page as you choose, and you may also return and pick-up the caption and print number if you wish.

The possible uses of your area publicity are many. The information in the magazine is listed as public property and may be reprinted without permission.

### **Did You Know?**

By: the Program Administrative Support Task Group, MWA

Ctrl + W will close the annoying pop-up advertising screens on the Internet.

[www.google.com/unclesam](http://www.google.com/unclesam) is a U.S. government search engine. You can find just about anything concerning the government via this engine.

There is now a website to access information about which countries we should not send correspondence without special permission.

-Access [www.treas.gov/ofac](http://www.treas.gov/ofac)

-Select "Sanctions Program and Country Summaries" located in the Content directory.

-Locate the country on the list.

-Note that some countries have both "Overview of Sanctions" and "Guidelines and Information."

-Select the information you want and it will open in Adobe Acrobat Reader

### **Make Time Productive**

By: Sandy Groneberg, MWA

We are all very busy! Is there ever a "spare" moment? And yet, we have times when there are a "few minutes" at the end of the day when we really don't want to start a new big project. So what do we do with that time? Here are a few suggestions to make that 15-minute interval productive:

- Reassess your personal goals - Are you on track with your goals? Do you need to re-prioritize your goals? Do you need to add or delete goals?
- Clean up your email. Check your archived email - are there things that are no longer needed and can be deleted?
- Teach yourself something new.
- Increase your ability to use the written and spoken word appropriately: Look up something in *The Gregg Reference Manual* that seems to give you problems (punctuation, proofreaders' marks, capitalization problems, troublesome words, etc.)

- Take time to explore a software program that you don't know well. Glance through the help topics and pick a topic that has given you problems or investigate features of the program that you haven't used.
- Keep a file of "things to read," that you can handle in spare minutes. It may be a new directive, or material on a new skill you want to develop.
- Clean out file drawers a couple of folders at a time. You could keep a "marker folder" in a file to show how far you have gotten for the next time you have 15 spare minutes.
- Brainstorm ways to streamline your work. Think about the tasks that take most of your time every day. Write down as many things as you can that would help make that job easier, faster, and more enjoyable, etc.
- Review your manuals for out-of-date materials. I look at my stack of manuals and I know there is outdated information that can be thrown. Try going through one book at a time, so that it doesn't seem like an overwhelming task.
- House-clean your address files. Do you have addresses, phone numbers and email addresses in your files that are obsolete?
- Organize project files. The ARIS on-line manual, Chapter 15F, tells what to keep in a research project file folder and the alignment of documents within the project folder.
- Create your own "Standard Operating Procedures Manual." If someone else needed to help you because you were out of the office sick for an extended time, would it be easy for them to know how to do things from the way your desk/office is organized and the notes you could provide for them regarding your job?
- Reorganize your computer files. Delete unnecessary files. Re-evaluate the folders. Do you ever have problems finding electronic files when you need them? Maybe you need to "re-file" your computer files.

- Journal your thoughts and ideas. Are you the person you want to be? What do you value? What do you need to do to become the person you want to be?
- Plan ahead. Jot down important projects coming up. Are there parts of those jobs that can be done ahead of schedule to make the job easier? Set time-lines for accomplishing the task on your calendar.

These are only a few ideas. You may like some of the ideas - you may dislike all the ideas. If you dislike all the ideas - guess what: You can use your first 15 spare minutes to come up with your own "list of things I want to do with 15 spare minutes." Good luck!